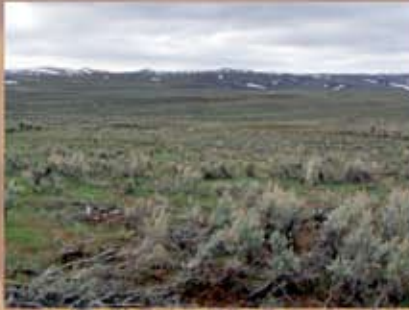


Sage-grouse **a new dawn for conservation in the West**



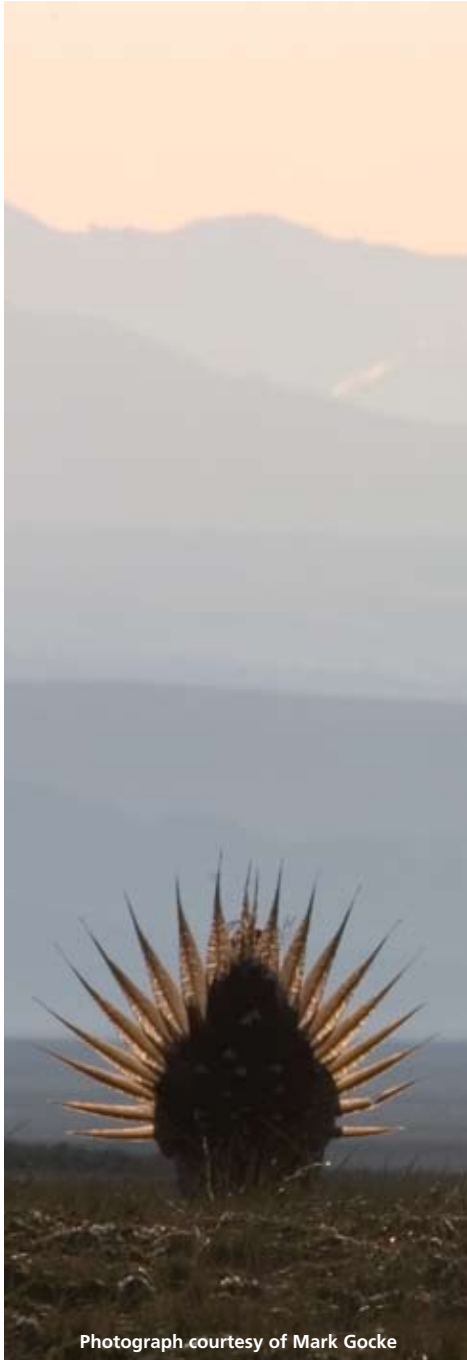
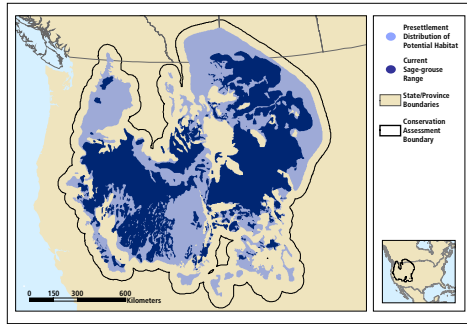
Since 1995, community-based, cooperative conservation planning has been the cornerstone of concerted efforts to reverse long-term declines in sage-grouse populations and habitats. Locally and cooperatively developed landscape-level plans involve all landowners because sage-grouse annually move across hundreds of miles of important habitat interspersed among public and private lands. The magnitude of such cooperation is unprecedented in western wildlife conservation, and all interested citizens are invited to participate.

Local working groups address a spectrum of current and historic issues affecting sage-grouse, such as habitat loss resulting from conversion, degradation, and fragmentation; opportunities for habitat protection and restoration; and other factors, including disturbance and disease. Because local conservation issues are best resolved by local people, State fish and wildlife agencies, acting through the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, teamed up with the USDI Bureau of Land Management, USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, and USDA Forest Service to lead, encourage, and support locally based conservation planning. The USDI Geological Survey, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Western Governors' Association are also actively supporting sage-grouse conservation efforts.

Local working groups are diverse, composed of private landowners; business interests; other interested citizens and organizations; and local, state, federal, and tribal government representatives. Over 50 local working groups are actively preparing and implementing conservation plans in the 11 States with sage-grouse populations.

For further information, contact the interagency Sage-Grouse Conservation Planning Framework Team (801-910-0215 or 928-443-5158) or a participating State wildlife agency.

Photograph courtesy of Mark Gocke



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- Greater sage-grouse occupy about 56% of the habitat that was available to them before the arrival of settlers of European descent. Gunnison sage-grouse occupy about 10% of the habitat that existed before the arrival of settlers.
- The apparent simple structure of the sagebrush biome, the largest semiarid ecosystem in the West, masks a complex and, in many places, fragile ecosystem. The sagebrush biome covers 120 million acres across 14 Western States and 3 Canadian Provinces.
- Primary ecosystem stressors include major land uses in the biome (agriculture, energy development, livestock grazing, mining, recreation, and urbanization), plus the effects of altered fire cycles, invasion by exotic and some native plant species, drought, soil erosion, and diseases affecting wildlife.
- In January 2005, the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service determined that the greater sage-grouse did not warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act but specifically stated that conservation efforts would be necessary to maintain the species and the sagebrush ecosystem.
- The interagency Sage-Grouse Conservation Planning Framework Team is coordinating development of a rangewide conservation strategy for greater sage-grouse, to be finished in December 2006. The strategy will be based on the strong foundation already being laid by local and state plans. It will also incorporate issues that are beyond the scope of those plans by using information developed through the conservation assessment and participation by all affected interests to address broader regional and rangewide concerns. For additional information, contact the team at 801-910-0215 or 928-443-5158.
- Participating agencies and organizations:
 Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
 State Fish and Wildlife Agencies of
 California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada,
 North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah,
 Washington, and Wyoming
 USDI Bureau of Land Management
 USDI Fish and Wildlife Service
 USDI Geological Survey
 USDA Forest Service
 USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
 Western Governors' Association
- Internet resources:
 Sagebrush biome and greater sage-grouse:
<http://sagemap.wr.usgs.gov>

Gunnison sage-grouse:
http://wildlife.state.co.us/species_cons/gunnison_sage_grouse

Continuing local conservation efforts are critical to the long-term survival of the sagebrush ecosystem and the species that depend on it. These efforts must be cooperative due to the vast array of interests and the ownership diversity of the land.